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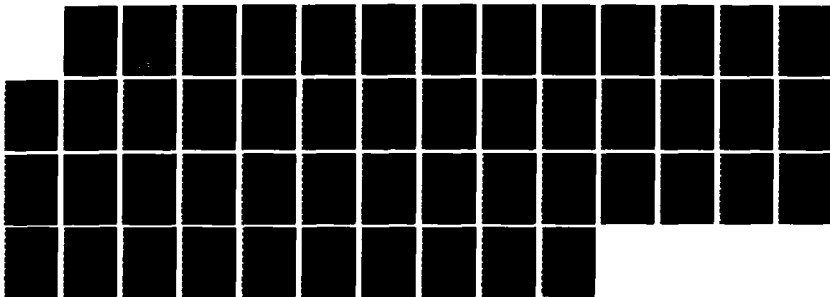
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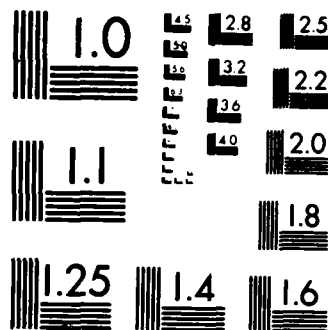
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Air Support for AirLand Battle

by

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AIR SUPPORT FOR AIRLAND BATTLE, by Major John M. Curran, USA, 43 pages.

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This monograph concludes that though in the broadest terms Air Force doctrine and AirLand Battle doctrine are compatible they differ on some key points. Air Force doctrine takes a theater perspective, visualizing joint warfare as being made up of one air campaign and one land campaign. AirLand Battle doctrine takes a lower level perspective and sees little segregation between the air and ground campaign. The two doctrines differ in emphasis in the areas of agility, synchronization, and unity of effort. These differences cause the two doctrines to not be as compatible as they should be.

This study recommends that the Air Force and Army come to an agreement on their understanding of the battlefield and develop a common perspective. It suggests that doctrine and procedures for the control of air support should emphasize maneuver, agility, and flexibility.

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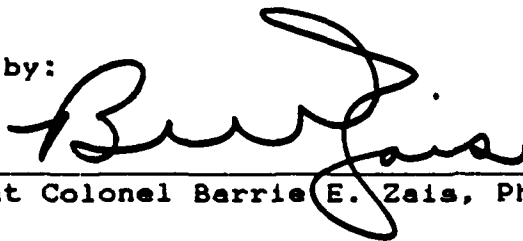
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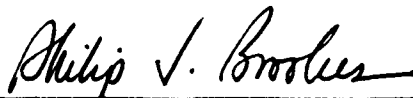
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ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

To be successful on the modern battlefield, air and ground forces must work in harmony toward the achievement of campaign goals. The days are gone when land forces could unilaterally conduct successful campaigns and major battles. Air forces have substantial capabilities to influence the ground campaign. Land force air defense systems seriously threaten air forces operating within their range. To be successful in a land theater of war both the enemy's air and land forces must be defeated. This is best accomplished through a synchronized theater campaign with air and land forces acting in harmony.

Central to the issue of a unified air and land campaign is the method by which air support for the land battle is controlled. The United States Air Force has established what it believes to be an effective and efficient method for command, control, and employment of air support for ground forces. It contends that its established methods have a sound theoretical basis and have been tested successfully in battle. These methods are well documented in both Air Force and Army doctrine. Yet since the publication of the root of today's air support doctrine, Field Manual 100-20, Command and Control of Air Power, in July 1943, control of air support has been a source of controversy between the Air Force and the Army. AirLand Battle doctrine has again resurfaced the debate over the control of air support for ground forces.

The Problem. This monograph will address the question of whether current Air Force doctrine for the control of air support best supports AirLand Battle doctrine. For the purposes of this study, air support includes air operations conducted in support of and in coordination with land forces. Air support includes the missions of close air support, attack of opposing forces in close proximity to friendly forces, air interdiction of hostile forces requiring coordination with the land commander, battlefield air interdiction, attacks against targets which are in a position to have a near term effect on friendly land forces, and tactical air reconnaissance.¹

Scope. To clarify further the scope of the monograph, the term "control" refers to doctrinal principles and procedures established for the command and employment of air support. This monograph will examine Air Force doctrine for the control of air support for the land campaign and its relationship to AirLand Battle doctrine. It will not consider control systems such as the Army Air Ground System or the Air Force Tactical Air Control System. These systems represent basic procedures and techniques and are beyond the scope of the study.

Significance of the Study. The question of whether current Air Force doctrine for the control of air support contributes to AirLand Battle doctrine certainly merits review. In 1982 the United States Army introduced AirLand Battle doctrine, a new approach to the conduct of combat

operations. The name of the doctrine implies recognition of the third dimension of the battlefield and the importance of air power in war. Air support plays a primary role in the execution of this new doctrine. The doctrinal principles and procedures for the control of air support dictate the degree of coordination, planning, and communication necessary between land and air forces to accomplish harmonious action. For this reason control of air support substantially influences the success of AirLand Battle doctrine.

Many of the past differences between the Air Force and Army concerning control of air support have resulted from lack of understanding of service doctrine, capabilities, and requirements. Today the primary goal must be the development of sound practices and procedures for execution of joint operations in order to win on the modern battlefield. Sound joint procedures are best developed when a common understanding exists between the services. It is with the hope of building understanding that this monograph is submitted.

Methodology. In attempting to answer the problem, this monograph will address the following questions: What is the current Air Force doctrine for the control of air support and what are its historical antecedents? What are the operational aspects of AirLand Battle doctrine and what are its requirements for air support? Given an understanding of both AirLand Battle doctrine and Air Force air support

doctrine, what are the issues surrounding the control of air support? Finally, this study will conclude with a discussion of the adequacy of current Air Force doctrine for the control of air support as it relates to AirLand Battle doctrine.

AIR FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL DOCTRINE AND ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The doctrine for aerospace forces (the doctrinal term for all air forces) can be found in Air Force Manual 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine. This manual contains the basic doctrine for the employment and preparation of the United States Air Force.²

Objectives of Aerospace Forces. The basic objective of aerospace forces is to win the air battle by gaining or maintaining control of the aerospace environment. Control of the aerospace environment, commonly known as air superiority, facilitates freedom of action for aerospace forces to conduct operations against the enemy. According to aerospace doctrine, air superiority allows commanders freedom to conduct successful attacks which can neutralize or destroy the enemy's warfighting potential.³ Gaining and maintaining air superiority is the first consideration for employment of aerospace forces.

Attack of the enemy's warfighting potential is the second objective of aerospace forces. This involves attacking enemy forces in contact with and those not yet

engaged with friendly forces. It also includes attacks against the enemy's war making capability. Attack of the enemy's warfighting potential is the fundamental purpose for air support. According to Air Force Manual 1-1, the enemy's ability to wage war should be attacked in depth and the enemy's warfighting capability should be continuously assessed. Therefore, a coordinated plan should be flexible enough to respond to the unforeseen or to take advantage of opportunities. The enemy should be attacked relentlessly. Air forces should concentrate on enemy targets that deny the enemy time and space to employ his forces effectively. Because of the effect of these attacks on the enemy, interdiction planning and coordination should be in concert with surface forces. Air Force Manual 1-1 acknowledges that close air support is an important addition to ground forces and that close support can enhance both offensive and defensive operations by creating opportunities. Attack of enemy forces in contact is necessary yet emphasis should be placed on interdiction of the enemy in depth.

Employment. According to Air Force Manual 1-1, the first principle for the employment of aerospace power is that it be employed as an indivisible entity. This is predicated on the belief that air power has the versatility and combat power to be decisive in a theater of war if employed in a unified manner. If air power is employed in a piecemeal fashion, its full capability cannot be realized. But when concentrated in a theater, against specific

objectives, threats, or opportunities, the results can be decisive.

Because of the inherent capabilities of airpower to influence a theater of war decisively, airpower should be employed by a commander who can exploit the inherent capabilities of the weapon concerned.⁵ For this reason, air forces must work directly for the joint force commander and be employed in a unified manner under the command of an air component commander. The air component commander directs, coordinates, and integrates the air effort within the theater for the joint force commander.⁶ The air component commander exercises command of his assigned air forces through subordinate air commanders thus providing unity of command and insuring unity of effort at the theater level.

Control. Control of theater air forces is centralized under the theater air component commander. Centralized control allows the theater air commander to direct the employment of air forces to achieve overall campaign objectives. Centralized control insures that scarce air resources will not be employed in a diluted manner but rather will be concentrated under a unified plan of action.⁷

On the other hand execution is controlled at the level most appropriate to maximize the combat power of air forces. Execution of aerospace missions is decentralized to the Air Force echelon most capable of controlling the execution. This allows the overall air commander to

concentrate on broad campaign objectives while subordinate air commanders focus on execution of specific missions. In all instances, air power will remain under the command and control of air commanders subordinate to the air component commander. Like the overall land commander, the air component commander will receive his campaign guidance from the joint force commander and will execute the air campaign and support of the ground force under his command and control.

The coordination and control of air support in theater is applied through the apportionment and allocation process. The joint force commander in consultation with his air, land, and naval component commanders apportions the total expected air effort by percentage and priority to the various air operations of the theater. The joint force commander decides the percentage of air support which will be available to the land component commander.^a

Based upon the joint force commander's apportionment decision, the air component commander turns the apportionment percentages into gross numbers of sorties for application to each air operation. He then allocates close air support sorties to the ground component commander for planning. The ground component commander must adjudicate the requirements of his subordinate units for air support and distribute sorties accordingly. Subordinate units can further distribute close air support sorties to their subordinate units.^b

Although air interdiction is apportioned like close air support it is handled differently. Air interdiction is planned and controlled by the air component commander. He directs the air interdiction campaign against the enemy's ability to sustain and maneuver forces. Air interdiction executed in support of the land component commander against enemy forces in a position to have a near term affect on friendly forces is called battlefield air interdiction . The land component commander nominates air interdiction and battlefield air interdiction targets to the air component commander for execution. Battlefield air interdiction sorties are planned and controlled at the Tactical Air Control Center in coordination with the land component commander's battlefield coordination element (BCE). The number of battlefield air interdiction sorties available is based upon the apportionment and allocation process.

The apportionment and allocation process is a theater system requiring participation of all three commanders. It is a method by which the air component commander can maintain control of air forces while supporting the joint force commander.

The fundamentals of Air Force doctrine for the control of air support assets are clear. Air support will be commanded and controlled through Air Force channels and it will be employed to defeat enemy air forces and achieve overall campaign objectives. Control of air support will be centralized while its execution will be decentralized.

Unity of command will be maintained within Air Force channels. Where do these concepts come from and how have they been developed? This question will be the subject of the remainder of this section.

Historical Background. Prior to World War II the U.S. Army Air Corps was heavily influenced by notable strategic air theorists such as General Giulio Douhet and General William Mitchell who preached centralized control and the strategic use of air power.¹⁰ Air Corps tactical theorists of the day, like the strategic theorists, advocated centralized control of air forces and employment of air power against the vital centers of the enemy, not support of ground forces.¹¹

Debate raged as to whether air power was best employed in support of land forces or in attack of the vital centers of the enemy. Twenty-six boards convened during the inter-war years to investigate the role of aviation and in general recommended that aviation remain an auxiliary of ground forces.¹² Though during the inter-war years aviation gained status, at the beginning of World War II it remained a part of the Army. The debate was substantial enough to prompt the Chief of Staff of the Army, General George C. Marshall to tell a graduating class of the Air Corps Tactical School, "Don't get the idea that you can support the military structure by flying out into the wild blue yonder".¹³

The Army Air Corps entered World War II operating

under the procedures for air support outlined in Field Manual 31-35, Aviation in Support of Ground Forces. In accordance with FM 31-35, an air force consisting of fighter, fighter bomber, and bomber forces was assigned to each theater. Fighter and fighter bomber units supporting the ground force were organized into air support commands and attached to a field army.¹⁴ These air support commands were subordinate to the supported ground commander. The final decision concerning air targets rested with the ground force commander. FM 31-35 stated that aircraft might be specifically allocated to support subordinate ground units.¹⁵ In reference to overall employment considerations, field service regulations of the day supported the ground commander's demand for support as the primary mission of tactical air forces. Regulations did, however, state that interdiction was the best way to achieve the greatest degree of support. Many of the airmen of the day disagreed with the doctrine.¹⁶

The first test of American air support doctrine occurred in North Africa. On 8 November 1942, allied forces landed on the shores of Algeria and Morocco and began movement westward into Tunisia. Allied forces were organized as depicted in figure 1. The U.S. 12th Air Force under BG James Doolittle and the Eastern Air Command (British) under Air Marshal Sir William Welsh were assigned as the supporting air forces for the three invading task forces. No overall air commander was established but

rather, General Eisenhower, Allied Expeditionary Force Commander, coordinated the efforts of the two air forces through his air chief of staff. In accordance with current doctrine, each of the task forces was provided some sort of air support command.¹⁷

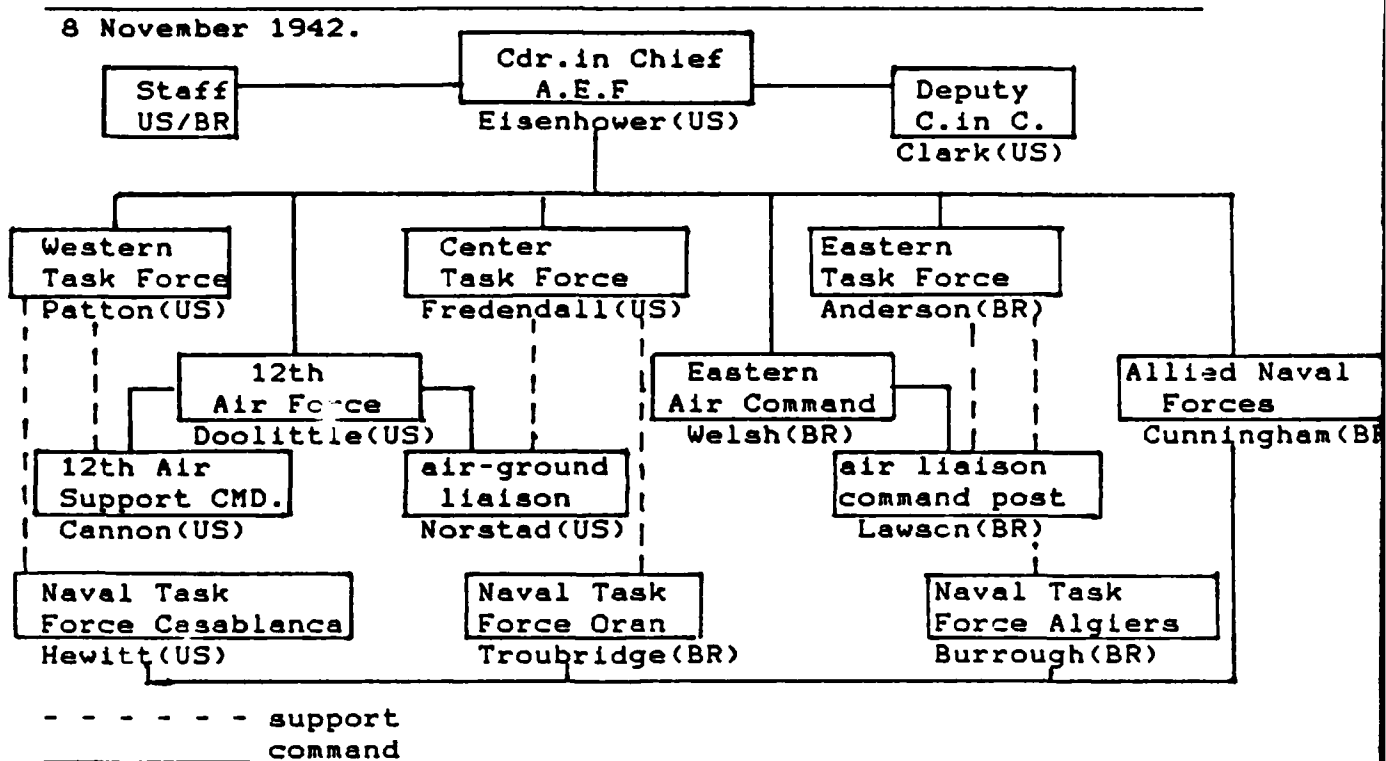


figure 1

The eastern task force's attack climaxed at the end of November falling short of its objective of Tunis and Bizerte. On 25 November Eisenhower offered his appraisal of Allied actions thus far.

"...they(operations) have violated every recognized principle of war, are in conflict with all operational and logistics methods laid down in textbooks, and will be condemned in their entirety by all Leavenworth and War College classes for the next twenty-five years."¹⁸

Problems in tactics and organization of this first Allied operation were abundant and continued to be so throughout the North African campaign¹⁹. The role of the French in the Allied effort was always unclear. Poor tactics abounded due mostly because of the "greenness" of American forces.²⁰ Inadequate equipment, allied bickering, and poor leadership all contributed to Allied failures.²¹ Supply lines from Algeria to Tunisia were long resulting in shortages in supplies, reserves, and spare parts. Allied differences in doctrine, equipment, and supply systems contributed to difficulties in Allied cooperation.²²

Air forces suffered from similar problems. Training in air-ground operations had been inadequate because of a lack of equipment and airplanes. Air support commands had been hastily organized and employed.²³ Long supply lines affected the supply of fuel, spare parts, and equipment.²⁴ Poorly trained ground forces mistook friendly for enemy aircraft and repeatedly shot down or damaged them.²⁵ After action reports concluded that the greatest problems centered on the lack of sufficient all weather airfields to support the land battle. Shortfalls in construction equipment and enemy intervention disrupted friendly airfield construction programs.²⁶ Rains turned airfields into quagmires and through February weather seemed to be against allied air efforts. In contrast, axis air forces possessed numerous suitable airfields close to the front.

Air support control arrangements initially proved

problematic. As the eastern task force moved rapidly into Tunisia, Eastern Air Command became over extended. Few forward air fields were available. Fighter units were released from 12th Air Force and attached to the Eastern Air Command.²⁷ Lack of coordination between the air support commands resulted in some forces not receiving air support.²⁸

During December and early January, both Eisenhower and Doolittle made changes in air organization. These changes are shown in figure 2.

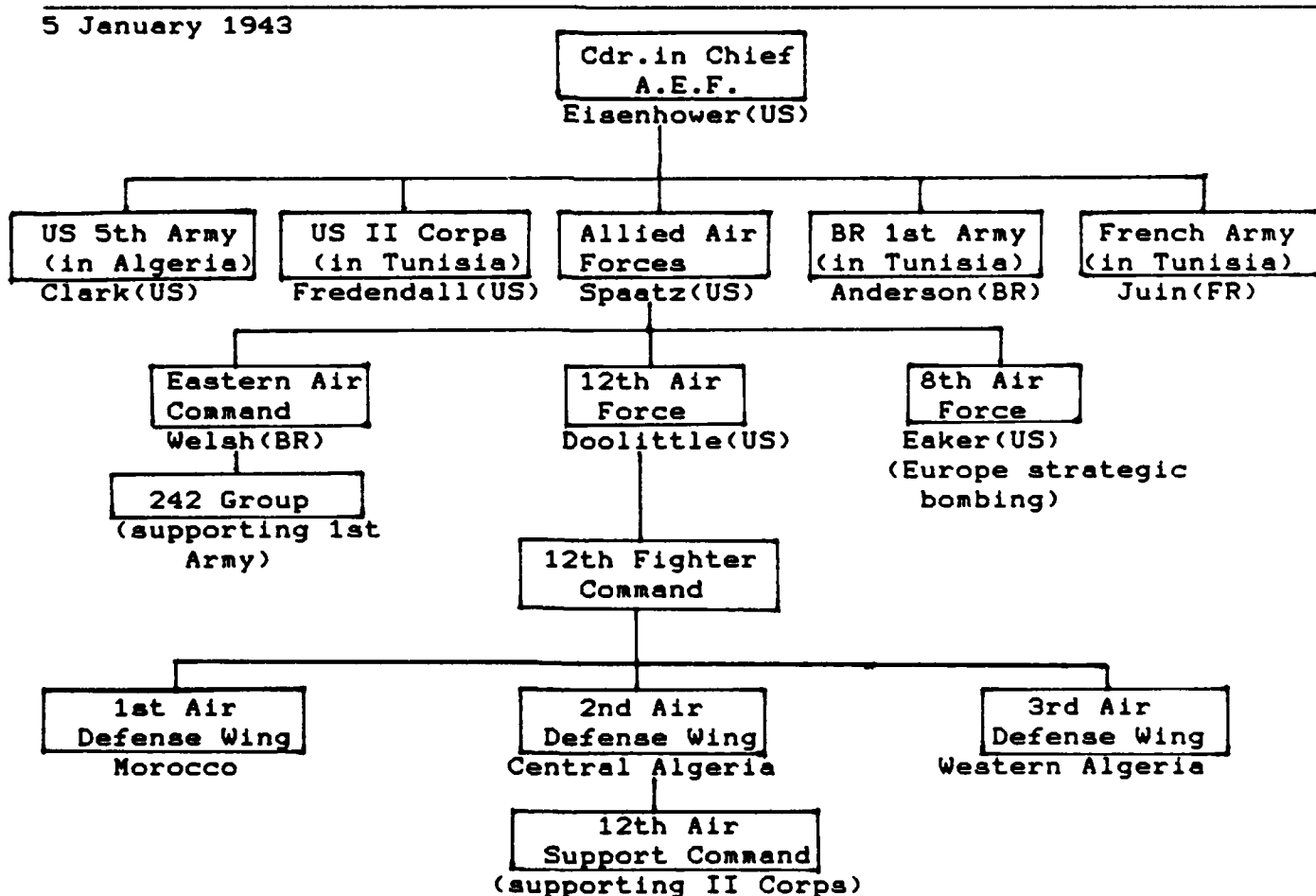


figure 2

Eisenhower established a theater air commander, MG Carl Spaatz. In Spaatz's new position he gained control of all air forces in Northwest Africa while continuing to retain his previous position as Air Chief (USA) European Theater of Operations. Doolittle reorganized the 12th Air Force along functional lines. He established three composite wings under the 12th Fighter Command covering geographic areas of operation and continued to support ground operations with 12th Air Support Command. In Army Air Corps circles, this new organization was more popular, yet ground support remained decentralized.²⁹

Meanwhile the allied air and ground campaign in Tunisia floundered for many of the reasons previously mentioned. Enemy air, operating from more numerous forward bases, continuously harassed allied bases. Because of the distance from bases to the battle area Spitfires could stay on station for only 5 to 10 minutes while German Stukas were based so close to the front that they could provide air support in 5 to 10 minutes from time of request.³⁰ Allied fighters were directed to fly protective cover over ground units or to fly fighter sweeps to counter enemy air attacks against ground and air forces but were not employed against enemy airfields.

In January 1943, the Casablanca conference and its associated allied military meetings directed a reorganization of the North African military command

structure to be implemented in February 1943. This new command structure is depicted in figure 3.

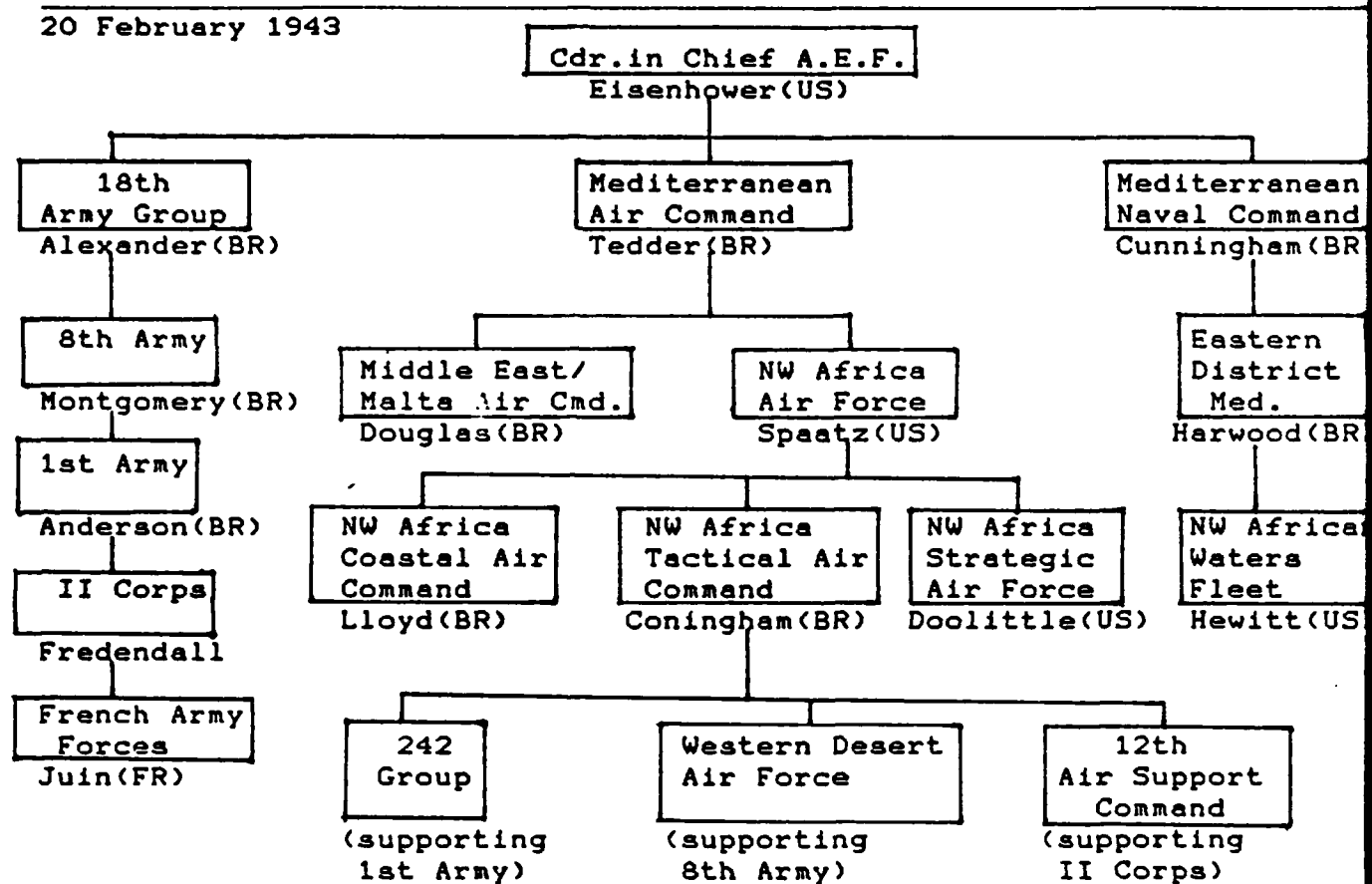


figure 3

Once Montgomery's forces reached a certain point they would be placed under Eisenhower's control. At that time Eisenhower would create an overall land force commander in General Sir Harold Alexander. Alexander would become commander of the new 18th Army Group consisting of the British 8th and 1st Armies, the French Army forces, and the US II Corps. Alexander would also act as the Deputy Allied Force Commander. Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder would

become Eisenhower's air component commander and commander, Mediterranean Air Command. Spaatz's organization would be redesignated North West Africa Air Force and incorporate all air forces on the African continent. Additionally under Spaatz, the North West Africa Tactical Air Force would be created with Air Marshal Sir Maori Coningham as its commander. Under Coningham all air support would be centralized for the first time under one air command.³¹

An enemy attack against allied positions in late January and the resultant poor allied coordination caused Eisenhower to institute some of the changes in organizational structure early. From 18 to 24 January changes in ground and air organizations were implemented. II Corps and the French Army forces were subordinated to British 1st Army. On 18 January, BG Laurence S. Kuter was installed in command of allied air support, charged with controlling Allied operations until the Northwest Tactical Air Force could be activated.³² Essentially Kuter was charged with coordinating and insuring unity of air support effort for all ground units.

The organization of ground and air forces described above was in effect at the time of the allied failure at Kasserine Pass. Land forces were under the control of the British 1st Army and tactical air support assets were under the control of BG Kuter. By the time of the Battle at Kasserine Pass, allied air forces had gone through a number of organizational changes which proved to have little

influence on the disastrous outcome.³³

Air Vice Marshal Coningham assumed control of the Northwest Africa Tactical Air Force on 17 February and initiated changes in tactical air support. He directed the abandonment of air umbrellas over the ground forces and directed maximum offensive action.³⁴ He emphasized closer cooperation between air and ground forces. On 20 March the Northwest Africa Tactical Bomber Force was activated under Coningham's direction. This force would conduct interdiction in support of the ground and air campaign. Coningham directed the construction of 13 forward bases for his force to be completed by 13 March.³⁵ Finally, of great significance to allied air forces, the 3rd Air Defense Wing arrived with offensive radar capable of ranging over enemy airfields.³⁶ Coningham used the radar to guide his fighters to the enemy.

Coningham's changes were not well received by all ground commanders. In April, LTG George S. Patton, commander of US II Corps, complained about the lack of air protection for his ground forces and the refusal of Coningham to revert back to defensive air umbrellas. This led to a conflict between Patton and Coningham that had to be resolved by Tedder himself. Even so, the allies were beginning to win the air battle. By April, Axis air forces had few fields remaining in Tunisia and the German Stukas had been driven from North Africa by improved anti-aircraft fire and allied fighters.³⁷

In July 1943, the Army Air Corps made a new doctrinal statement with the publication of Field Manual 100-20, Command and Employment of Air Power . This doctrine supported the way tactical air forces were controlled and employed by Coningham.³⁸

Field Manual 100-20 established air superiority as the first priority for air forces for the success of major land operations. It stated that air and land power were co-equal with neither subordinate to the other. It further mandated that air power be under the centralized control of a single air commander who should report directly to a superior commander charged with the overall conduct of land, sea, and air operations in the theater of operations. Finally, FM 100-20 stated that tactical air forces should be tailored to the theater and should not serve the ground force only, but rather the theater campaign effort as a whole.³⁹ The fundamental principles outlined in FM 100-20 guided the application of air power for the remainder of World War II.

Ground and air commanders continued to disagree throughout the war about the control of air support. Ground commanders desired aviation to neutralize enemy ground fires and protect friendly ground movements. Air commanders argued that such use of tactical air support would be wasteful of air power.⁴⁰ The degree of coordination between Army commanders and their supporting air support commands varied between commands.

In Korea and Vietnam the principles for control of air support remained unchanged, but not without controversy. In Korea, Air Force proponents challenged the Marine Corps use of its air wings independent of the theater air component commander's control. Marine air forces were, for a time, subordinated to the 5th Air Force to the displeasure of the Marines.⁴¹ This controversy over control of Marine air, once in support of the ground campaign, remains vibrant today. In Vietnam, in addition to the Marine air issue, the lack of a separate land component commander and the divided control of strategic and theater air power operations raised concerns among air and ground commanders alike. However, in both Korea and Vietnam, the vast superiority of U.S. air power resulted in excellent air support for ground forces and seemed to negate any significant concern over air support issues.

Though the controversy continues, the historical roots of today's Air Force doctrine for the command, control, and employment of tactical air power can be traced to doctrinal developments in World War II. The similarities in doctrine outlined in Field Manual 100-20 and Air Force Manual 1-1 are clear. They represent the theories of air power supported by such advocates as Tedder, Coningham, Arnold, and Mitchell. Though Air Force advocates state that the doctrine for control of air support resulted from the lessons learned in North Africa, an equally convincing case can be made for the theory that North Africa provided an

excuse for implementing doctrine previously derived in the minds of air power enthusiasts.⁴² As the evidence demonstrates, the method by which air support was controlled in North Africa was one of the problems but not the major reason for poor American air support. Poor training, tactics, and lack of airfields were the major reasons for inadequate air support.

Having identified the basic concepts of Air Force basic doctrine, and reviewed the historical background, we will review the operational aspects of AirLand Battle doctrine and its requirements for air support.

AIRLAND BATTLE DOCTRINE AND ITS REQUIREMENTS FOR AIR SUPPORT

AirLand Battle doctrine is a relatively new approach to fighting for the United States Army. Unlike previous Army doctrine it emphasizes tactical flexibility, speed, mission orders, initiative among subordinates, and the spirit of the offense.⁴³ AirLand Battle doctrine promotes a maneuver style of warfare in contrast to previous doctrine which emphasized an attrition style.

Operational Aspects of the Doctrine. According to FM100-5, operational art is defined as;

"...the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and the conduct of campaigns and major operations."⁴⁴

Army groups and armies normally plan the major operations

of the ground campaign and corps and divisions execute those operations.⁴⁵ At the operational level, the commander must focus on the aim of the operation, the sequencing of the fight, and the forces available to achieve the strategic goal.

The four basic tenets of AirLand Battle doctrine are initiative, depth, agility, and synchronization.⁴⁶ At the operational level the tenet of initiative implies taking action to cause the enemy to conform to your campaign plan rather than to react to his. It promotes an offensive spirit in the conduct of the campaign, and aims at always seeking to gain and maintain the initiative. Maneuver is the means at the operational level for gaining the initiative especially when opposing a superior enemy.

The tenet of depth calls for taking an extended view of the battlefield and for looking beyond the line of contact with the enemy. It implies attacking the enemy in his depth, restricting his maneuver, and causing his campaign plan to fail. It also implies conserving one's own freedom of action and protecting the force in depth.

Agility at the operational level is both mental and physical. It implies the capability to act faster than the enemy, keeping him off balance and confused. It requires command and control systems that act faster than the those of the enemy and combat assets which are flexible and responsive.

The tenet of synchronization at the operational level

requires the arrangement of the battlefield in time, space, and purpose to take maximum advantage of friendly combat power. It implies unity of purpose and synchronized action of all assets towards the accomplishment of campaign aims. Synchronization requires coordination among the various units participating in the campaign in an attempt to obtain a synergistic effect greater than the sum of all the combat power involved.

In concert with the tenets listed above, AirLand Battle doctrine takes a realistic view of the battlefield. Future campaigns will involve considerable movement. With the capability of today's forces for speed, mobility, and lethality, AirLand Battle envisions a non-linear battlefield. In concert with the tenets of depth and synchronization, it views the battle as consisting of three operations, deep, close, and rear. All three must be synchronized. This will require detailed planning, coordination, and the proper use of different assets in the three operations.

The synchronization of all three operations of the battle will require effective and efficient command and control of combat power without stifling initiative. AirLand Battle doctrine thus requires a command and control system that facilitates freedom of action, delegation of authority, and effective leadership at the critical point.⁴⁷ The initial plan must establish the overall commander's intent for the campaign and the responsibilities

of subordinate commanders, who must be given the greatest possible latitude in carrying out their responsibilities. A command and control system to allow this flexibility must have well established operational techniques and practices to facilitate synchronization. To permit freedom of action at lower levels while insuring unity of effort, commanders must know the intent of their higher commanders at least two levels up. In essence AirLand Battle doctrine places great emphasis on understanding the aim and intent of the overall commander and on initiative at lower levels in carrying out the commander's will.

Planning and Conducting Campaigns and Major Operations. AirLand Battle doctrine views the principal aim of the joint force commander as concentrating superior combat strength against enemy vulnerabilities.^{4a} This implies that ground, air, and naval force operations must concentrate on enemy vulnerabilities in their own medium. Additionally, it implies that the joint force commander should, when possible, focus the combat strength of two or all three services in a complementary fashion against a single enemy vulnerability. The joint force commander must view the battlefield in all of its dimensions, land, sea, and air and try to set favorable conditions for his campaign in all three mediums. This will require close cooperation between all services in the execution of the campaign.

As indicated above, AirLand Battle doctrine recognizes

the joint nature of campaigns and major operations. It takes an enlarged view of the battlefield and stresses the requirement for employing joint forces in a complementary fashion to achieve all campaign goals. It distinguishes the operational level from the tactical level of war and in so doing recognizes that tactical thinking will not necessarily suffice at the operational level. This operational perspective makes AirLand Battle a substantial improvement over previous Army doctrine.

Requirements for Air Support. AirLand Battle doctrine recognizes that initiative is as important to the employment of air forces as it is to the employment of ground forces. Therefore, the first priority for air support is the maintenance of freedom of action. This implies control of the air environment or air superiority. Operational maneuver will require protection from enemy air forces. AirLand Battle doctrine recognizes that control of the air environment facilitates operational maneuver. It also recognizes that the gaining and maintaining of air superiority must be done through offensive action and attack of enemy air forces in depth. Counter air actions should be synchronized with the ground forces to insure protection and to take advantage of opportunities.

In support of the land campaign, air power is the primary means with which the operational ground commander may strike the enemy deep. Such attacks in depth isolate his forces in contact from reinforcement and cause the

enemy to change his plan. Therefore, air support must be responsive to the needs of the ground commander.

Air support must be synchronized with the ground campaign. Tactical air efforts should be concentrated at the decisive point on the battlefield to assist overall ground action. Air interdiction and battlefield air interdiction should complement the maneuver of ground forces both in the short and long term.⁴² In essence operational planning of both ground and air forces must be designed to be mutually supporting.

Operational planning and execution will require extensive coordination. This implies a need for an effective, responsive link between tactical air forces and the supported ground force. It also implies close and continuous joint planning both in future and current operations.

Because of the fluidity of the battlefield and the desire for initiative at the lowest level, once air support is committed, a responsive method of management of tactical air forces is required. This management system must maximize air capabilities while simultaneously maintaining the greatest degree of flexibility for the commander employing air assets.

AirLand Battle doctrine requires that all forces have a common view of the battlefield. This means that both tactical air forces and ground forces must share a common view of what must be accomplished, how it must be

accomplished, and when it must be accomplished. In essence it means unity of effort and mutual support at the point of execution.

The main points of AirLand Battle doctrine and Air Force doctrine for the control of air support have been identified. We now can discuss some of the issues concerning their compatibility.

THE ISSUES SURROUNDING CONTROL OF AIR SUPPORT.

The issues surrounding the control of air support are numerous. In an attempt to deal with them in a coherent manner this section will present three major categories.

Doctrinal Perspectives. Many similarities exist in basic Air Force and Army doctrine. Both doctrines emphasize initiative and offensive action in the conduct of operations. AirLand Battle doctrine emphasizes depth on the battlefield. It seeks means to strike the enemy both at the line of contact and beyond while protecting itself in depth. Air Force doctrine has historically emphasized depth. Even FM 31-35 and associated training circulars of the time pointed out the desirability of interdiction as a means of striking the enemy in depth.³⁰ The principles of objective, unity of command, concentration, and the offense permeate both Air Force and Army doctrine.

The two doctrines have at least one significant difference, perspective. Air Force doctrine views campaigns as being made up of one air and one land operation

orchestrated to achieve the overall campaign objective. AirLand Battle takes a different approach. It views the campaign as being made up of several air and several land operations which must be synchronized to achieve the single campaign objective. This difference in perspective has resulted in planning and coordination problems.

Air Force advocates are concerned about the Army's view of campaigns. They contend that a focus on multiple operations causes the Army to be overly concerned with corps operations and below.³¹ The Air Force is not prepared to plan and coordinate with multiple land forces but prefers to coordinate operations with one land component commander. If there is no land component commander, the Air Force advocates contend, there will be no one to adjudicate competitive requirements for air support.³²

Army advocates agree that there is a mismatch in perspectives.³³ However, they argue that today's corps is as large and has the same mission as World War II field armies and, therefore, should be supported as such. Additionally, with AirLand Battle's emphasis on agility, corps commanders must have the flexibility to control their battle. Finally, some Army advocates argue that there should not be any distinction between the air and land battle within the theater. They state that there really isn't any purely land battle unless the enemy does not possess an air force.³⁴

This mismatch of perspectives has led to differences

in opinion concerning the level at which air support should be controlled and the apportionment and allocation process.

Level of Control. In keeping with current doctrine and historical background, the Air Force contends that air power must be controlled from the theater level in order to maintain the capability to fight the air campaign. Without centralized, theater level control, air forces risk the possibility of being employed piecemeal. This system worked well when the threat to friendly air forces was enemy aircraft. Some believe that the threat now is enemy air defenses and this concept may no longer be completely valid.==

With AirLand battle's concept of agility and unity of effort at the lowest level, disparity exists over the level of control of air support. Air advocates contend that air power must be controlled by the commander capable of employing the weapon to gain decisive campaign results. Army advocates are concerned that air support, controlled from such a high level, will not be responsive enough to support the ground battle.

Control and coordination of air support occurs through the apportionment and allocation process which is a theater level system. For this system to work, there must be a land component commander to divide up air support among the ground forces. This system allows the joint force commander to split out air percentages vertically to different air operations. It is not designed for him to manage more than

one land force for there is no procedure for him to split air support horizontally. This means that there is no procedure for him to weight one land force with air support over another. If the capability existed for the joint force commander to concentrate air support effort in a land area and distribute air support to more than one land force, an overall land component commander would not be needed.

The Air Force's misgivings over this issue are, again, fear of piecemeal application of air support and concern over the objectivity of the joint force commander. If the joint force commander is dual hatted as the ground component commander it may be difficult for him to apportion air assets objectively for the good of the entire theater. He may become over influenced by the ground campaign.

Procedures and Technology. The level at which air support is controlled influences the procedures for execution. Air Force doctrine directs that air support will be executed at the level where it can be most effective and efficient. This means that air missions will be directed by air commanders in direct control of the aircraft flying the mission. Coordination between air and supported ground forces takes place through the Air Support Operations Center, the decentralized coordinating agency for tactical air support for the Army.³⁶ Coordination and communication between the Air Support Operations Center, the supported ground force, and the air asset providing the support is

accomplished through a substantial communications network. This network encompasses the air-ground operations system which provides the means to coordinate and execute air support.⁵⁷

The air-ground operations system is designed to be responsive to ground needs and handle preplanned and immediate close air support and battlefield air interdiction requests. Controversy exists over whether it is responsive enough to support the land battle. This system for air ground coordination is communications dependent. Given threat capabilities to interrupt communications, anticipated battlefield confusion as the war becomes non-linear, and Clausewitz's friction, Army advocates lack confidence in its responsiveness.

For the system to function efficiently, preplanned close air support requests should be submitted 24 hours in advance and battlefield air interdiction missions up to 36 hours in advance. Ground forces are hard pressed to predict enemy locations with that precision. The intelligence gathering capability of ground forces is inadequate to locate potential targets within that time frame. In a fast, mobile situation such as Central Europe, threat second echelon forces can close great distances in a short time. The intelligence collection assets able to reach out the distances necessary to locate the enemy in sufficient time to engage them with air assets, belong to the Air Force.

The necessity to plan targets so far in advance is

driven by scarce air assets and technology. For battlefield air interdiction missions aircraft with different capabilities must be configured into strike packages in order to survive enemy air defenses enroute to and from the target. Munitions are specialized for different targets and take time to upload. Aircrews must have time to plan the mission. In summary, air combat operations are complicated and specialized, and take time to prepare.

Given these factors, air forces find it difficult to respond rapidly to ground needs and ground forces find it difficult to locate and predict targets within time parameters. These facts have led to frustration in the implementation of air support in accordance with the principles of AirLand Battle doctrine. As Army commanders attempt to exercise agility and synchronize combat power they find air support lacking in responsiveness and flexibility.

Though more issues probably exist, the above discussion has touched on the major sources of controversy surrounding the control of air support.

CONCLUSIONS

This monograph has attempted to take an objective look at Air Force doctrine for the command, control, and employment of air support for ground forces. It has reviewed the historical events that form the roots of basic Air Force doctrine. It has identified the fundamental

operational aspects of AirLand Battle doctrine and identified the major issues surrounding the adequacy of current air support for AirLand Battle. From this review some general conclusions can be made about the adequacy of Air Force doctrine for the control of air support for AirLand Battle.

Doctrinal Compatibility. From the review of AirLand Battle doctrine and basic Air Force doctrine we find that in the broadest terms they are compatible. Each identifies initiative and depth as fundamental tenets for the execution of combat action. Both are offensive in nature and believe in carrying the fight to the enemy. They recognize the joint nature of warfare and the interdependence of air and ground action in pursuit of the overall campaign aim.

They also differ on some very important points. AirLand Battle doctrine and Air Force doctrine view the battlefield from different perspectives. Air Force doctrine takes a theater approach visualizing the war as being made up of a land campaign and an air campaign. AirLand Battle doctrine takes a lower level perspective and sees little distinction between the air and ground campaign. AirLand Battle emphasizes agility and synchronization more than Air Force doctrine. Unity of effort is viewed at a higher level in Air Force doctrine than in AirLand Battle doctrine. These differences are substantial.

After a review of the issues and the differences

between AirLand Battle doctrine and Air Force doctrine it is apparent that they are not as compatible as they should be. Air Force doctrine for the control of air support does not contribute to the degree necessary to the execution of AirLand Battle. It meets Air Force requirements for efficiency but not the Army's requirement for effectiveness.

Requirements for Improvement in Compatibility. The Army and the Air Force must come to agreement on their understanding of the battlefield. Today's battlefield is certainly different than it was in World War II. The threat to aircraft from both ground and air systems has significantly increased. Ground forces are faced with enormous challenges on an extremely lethal and fast paced battlefield. Any major power which the United States may face is equipped with mobile forces of equal sophistication and firepower. Today, unlike in World War II, Korea, or Vietnam, the United States faces a potential adversary with superiority in numbers. Therefore, maneuver and agility will be important to US fighting forces if they are to win in the next war.

Whatever the procedures for control of combat forces, they must be flexible and promote agility. Current systems for control of air support are far from what is needed. They are too centralized and too dependent on communications. They are unrealistic in terms of intelligence capabilities and timing. They do not promote

agility and flexibility.

At the beginning of World War II, the United States Army and Air Corps entered the war with inadequate training, differences in tactical philosophy, and inexperience in conducting joint operations. The philosophical differences still exist. In May 1984, the Air Force and Army Chiefs of Staff signed a Memorandum of Agreement concerning joint warfighting initiatives. This was a step towards beginning the process of resolving these philosophical differences. We must continue to take bold steps to insure that we do not enter future wars as ill-prepared as in 1942.

When Air Marshal Coningham took control of the Northwest African Air Force in Tunisia in February 1943, he stressed the "marriage" of air and ground forces. He developed tactics and doctrine which formed a close union between the air support commands and their supported ground forces.³⁰ Air Marshal Tedder once said;

" There have been some enthusiasts who claim that air power can win the war by itself...In my view all three arms of defence are inevitably involved, though the correct balance between them may and will vary."³¹

We need to follow the advice of these two great air power advocates.

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